

MINUTES FOR NOVEMBER 5, 2009
MEETING OF THE PEDESTRIAN AND TRAFFIC SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Members Present: Erwin Mack, Chair; Alyce Ortuzar; Peter Moe, MSHA, MHSO; Bill Bronrott Vice-Chair; Justin Clarke, MNCPPC ; Lt. James Humphries, MCPD; Ramin Assa, Colleen Mitchell, Richard Romer representing Councilmember Ervin; James D'Andrea, MCPS

Members Absent: John Britton, Doris Depaz; Steve Friedman; Arthur Holmes; Alan Migdall; Jack Strausman; Ken Hartman, BCC Regional Service Center; John Britton, Municipal League

County Staff: Tom Pogue, Community Outreach, MCDOT; Jeff Duncel, Pedestrian Safety Coordinator, MCDOT; Fred Lees, MCDOT TEOD; Bill Selby, MCDOT

Guests: Richard Hoyer; John Wetmore, Perils for Pedestrians Television; Chief Tom Manger, MCPD; Chief T. N. Treshuk, City of Rockville Police; Sgt. Scott Scarff, City of Gaithersburg Police; Chief Roy Gordon, Chevy Chase Village Police; Chief Ron Ricucci, Takoma Park Police; Asst. Chief Betsy Davis, MCPD; Cpt. John Damskey, MCPD, Traffic Division;

1.) Committee Business:

Review Minutes from October Meeting – Approval/Changes

Introduction of Ramin Assa – John Howley's replacement

Press events:

October 28 – Ribbon Cutting at Takoma-Langley Crossroads

October 29 – Kick off of Parking Lot Safety Campaign

November 2 – Pedestrian Sting With Sparky and McGruff

November 19 – Piney Branch HIA Education Kick-off/Shop with Cops

Departure of Larry McGoogin as SRTS Coordinator

2.) Welcome to the Chiefs of Police of and in Montgomery County

Tom Manger, Chief, Montgomery County

Betsy Davis, Assistant Chief, Montgomery County

Roy Gordon, Chief, Chevy Chase

Ronald Ricucci, Chief, Takoma Park

T. N. Treschuk, Chief, Rockville

John King, Chief, Gaithersburg (or Scott Scarff, Sergeant)

3.) Subcommittee Reports and Updates:

- Bicycle Access and Safety
- BRAC – Medical Center Access

- Annual Report
- Innovative Pedestrian Signal Engineering
- Speed Humps

Peter Moe
Bill Bronrott/
Justin Clarke
Colleen Mitchell
Alan Migdall
John Britton

4.) Results of Budget Priorities Survey

5.) New Business/Committee Comments:

Committee

New Business:

MCDOT Draft Letter on Sidewalks Hearing Process

Parking Lot Pedestrian Collisions-Danger Zone Campaign

Landscaping in the ROW – deferred to January

Fire and Rescue Personnel in January, 2010

Next Scheduled Meeting Date: January 7, 2010

6.) Adjourn

1. Committee Business:

Chairman Erwin Mack called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm. Mack asked Jeff Dunckel to introduce the new appointment to the committee: Ramin Assa was approved for appointment by County Council two weeks ago and will fill the vacancy left by the resignation of John Howley last March. Assa introduced himself. The committee is now at full strength with all seventeen members appointed.

Dunckel reported there had been a flurry of press events focusing on pedestrian safety: On October 28, a ribbon cutting ceremony for the pedestrian safety improvements made at the Takoma/Langley Crossroads was held with many officials and dignitaries present. Erwin Mack presided over the event, as he was responsible for working with the State to make these improvements happen over six years of effort. On October 29, the County Executive held a press event at the Leisure World Shopping Center on Georgia Avenue to announce the kick-off of the "Parking Lots are Pedestrian Danger Zones," campaign - a campaign to raise awareness of pedestrian safety in parking lots. The County determined that 22% of all County ped collisions are occurring in parking lots. This event occurred on the same day Street Smart held a "Zombies in the Crosswalks," event in Georgetown, to raise attention that pedestrians and drivers need to pay more attention and not be distracted when crossing the street or driving. Together, good media coverage was provided on pedestrian safety, just as daylight savings time was ending. November 2, at the intersection of Georgia Avenue and Colesville Road in Silver Spring, the Fire and Rescue mascot Sparky, and the police mascot McGruff, served as police decoys in a sting operation to ticket motorists not yielding to pedestrians in the crosswalks. This event served to announce the increased enforcement efforts planned for this fall, when pedestrian collisions rise. The next press event is being planned for November 19, when the Piney Branch Education and Enforcement activities will be kicked off, focusing on police and community safety promotion teams (staffed by CASA) that will work the streets to educate and inform pedestrians and drivers about the need to improve pedestrian safety and obey traffic laws. This is a joint project involving MCDOT, the Public Information Office, MCPD, MDSHA's State Highway Safety Office, and the Department of Housing and Community Affairs, as well as area merchants. Brightly colored shopping bags will be handed out to emphasize the importance of being seen in these darker times as Standard Time replaces Daylight Savings Time, and the hours of daylight are shortened.

Mack announced that Larry McGoogin, Safe Routes to Schools Coordinator, has resigned to move with his family to Nashville, Tennessee. Tom Pogue stated we will be moving ahead to find a replacement as soon as we can. The position is fully funded under a State grant. An exemption from the hiring freeze in County Government has been requested to enable the position to be filled by a replacement.

MOTION: To send a note of appreciation from the committee to Larry McGoogin for the work he did. Motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

2. Welcome to the Chiefs of Police:

Mack introduced the Chiefs of Police for all jurisdictions in Montgomery County, as partners and community resources to improving Pedestrian Safety. Mack wanted to inform them of the work the committee is doing. Each police jurisdiction was invited to attend; those present introduced themselves: Chief Tom Manager, Montgomery County Police Department; Chief Terrence Treschuk, City of Rockville; Sgt. Scott Scarff, filling in for Gaithersburg Police Chief John King; Chief Roy Gordon, Chevy Chase; Chief Ron Ricucci, City of Takoma Park; Asst. Chief Betsy Davis, in charge of patrols at all MCPD District Stations; Cpt. John Damskey, manager of MCPD Traffic Unit; Parks Police Chief Darien Manley, Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commissions (MNCPPC).

Mack introduced Peter Moe, co-chair of the Bicycle Access and Safety Subcommittee, to provide an overview of the issues being considered for bicycle safety. Moe reviewed the handout of issues and proposals being considered by the subcommittee; this is a work in progress. The first issue pertains to bicyclists' use of crosswalks: advocates would like bicyclists to be able to use crosswalks, where permitted by law. Montgomery County is the only jurisdiction that allows bicycles to travel on sidewalks. The second issue was mandatory use of shoulders: advocates want the law repealed that requires bicycles to travel in the shoulder when a shoulder is provided. Sometimes conditions in the shoulder are not safe for bicycles to operate. Needs to be meaningful definition of what is an adequate/safe shoulder. The third issues as to maintain a three foot buffer for vehicles and bicycles - a law in effect in some other states. Many details that may make such a law difficult to enforce - must be mindful of any law change having seen and unseen consequences. A fourth issue is the bicycles treating stop signs as yield signs when not cars or pedestrians are present. The fifth final issue pertains to different police officers interpreting the laws pertaining to bicycles differently - lack of uniform interpretation. Should there be law "cards" for officers to be able to refer to for how to interpret the traffic laws pertaining

to bikes? NHTSA does have some videos/cds to use for training on bicycle laws. Perhaps some type of state-wide training could be conducted; SHA Highway Traffic Safety Office would be interested in supporting that. Moe expressed the committee's interest in having input from the various police departments as the subcommittee is considering its recommendations.

Mack invited the Chiefs to react to the bicycle subcommittee's issues summary. Chief Manger, an avid cyclist, found many of the recommendations attractive from a cyclist's perspective. But as a Chief of Police, he would be concerned about how some of these recommendations could be enforced. Some folks would expect the police to be able to enforce the 3-foot rule by measuring the clearance distances of passing vehicles. The yielding at stop signs – what if a bike doesn't stop when a car is at the stop sign, but the driver thinks the cyclist will stop - - these situations can create hazards. Training on bicycle laws: Manger thought this was a good idea - - liked the "cards" idea. Chief Treschuk expressed his concurrence with Manger on these observations. Training always benefits everyone – both police and cyclists. Sgt. Schraff pointed out that the laws may be different in municipalities - - Gaithersburg does not allow bicycles on the sidewalks. Municipalities need to be at the table discussing these issues because their laws may vary; need to build some consensus and consistency in laws. Chief Gordon pointed out that under State law, bicycles are vehicles; bicycles should take dedicated paths or take another route - - Connecticut Avenue is not appropriate for bicycles and there is no ability for bikes to use the sidewalk. Gordon supported training also. Chief Ricucci said getting bicyclists to obey the traffic laws in Takoma Park is one of their biggest problems - - don't respect the stop signs, especially going down Maple to the Metro station. Needs to be more enforcement. Asst. Chief Davis and Ricucci agreed that it was about more than just educating the police, but about educating the public and the bicyclists as well. Start bicycle education early, teaching safety and rules to the kids. Chief Manley, while supporting most of what had been said, had concerns with bicycles in the crosswalks, especially if bikes are traveling at a high rate of speed or in the opposite direction of vehicular traffic. Need to decrease conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists, not increase them. Issues like the "Idaho Stop," treating stop signs like yield signs - - the problem may be changing the culture of motorists who expect bikes to stop at stop signs. Drivers already have problems knowing what the laws are that have been on the books for many years; start changing the laws and you may end up with more confusion and less safe conditions.

ACTION: Mack will provide Peter Moe and Steve Friedman the email addresses of the Chiefs of Police so that they may send information and recommendations directly to them for their comments and use by the subcommittee. Moe and Friedman will seek input from the Chiefs and their staffs.

Dunckel noted that Rockville was cited as having a very active pedestrian and bicycle safety advisory group. He asked if other jurisdictions had similar groups. Takoma Park has a Safe Roadways advisory committee. Chevy Chase has a Public Safety Committee.

Co-chairman Bill Bronrott called out the need to do more about designating bike lanes - - that more bike lanes need to be created. - - more needs to be done to provide off street pedestrian and bicycle facilities that link up commercial centers and neighborhoods. He is also working on legislation with Delegate Simmons that, like a negligent homicide law, would render penalties on those who hit bicyclists or pedestrians. Now the laws are not clear about penalties for motorists who may strike a pedestrian or bicyclists.

Mack asked Justin Clarke to comment on the work Alan Migdall is doing on the Innovative Pedestrian Signal Design Subcommittee. Clark stated that Alan is going to be briefed on what MNCPPC is doing with modeling with ped counts. This briefing has been set for November 10 at 7:30 pm in the MNCPPC offices. Everyone who is interested in the topic is invited.

Chief Gordon expressed his support of the "barn dance" crosswalk (or Denver Crosswalk) where the lights stop all vehicular traffic and pedestrians are able to cross all directions at one time. He noted how dangerous the current configuration at Woodmont and Bethesda Avenue was, when vehicles could not tell when pedestrians had a cross signal due to the placement of the crosswalks back from the intersections. Chief Treschuk noted Rockville's success with the flashing signals at crosswalks (stutter flash signals) and pedestrian flags.

On Speed Humps, Mack noted John Britton's efforts to develop a PTSAC recommendation on this topic. Chiefs generally concurred that speed humps do effectively slow traffic down. Speed cushions (with gaps for emergency vehicles) are used by Chevy Chase. Gaithersburg uses planning charettes on traffic calming measures to build community support. Road design is also a factor. Roads need to be designed to encourage slower speeds, not higher speeds.

In closing, Chief Manger cited the important role the PTSAC has played in improving pedestrian safety in the County. A variety of other issues were discussed or mentioned: MNCPPC Park Police participation on the committee; the bogus

opinion piece in the Washington Post Style section maligning the speed camera program, despite its proven success in reducing speeds and crashes; the need to further “data driven” results by using data analysis to make the program more targeted and effective; An interest in having police ride with cyclists more often to experience the challenges of the roadways; enforcement actions will be ineffective without education efforts to go with it.

Review of October Minutes: Dunckel explained that the minutes were becoming very lengthy, and that future minutes would be more of a summation of the meeting than a transcript.

MOTION: Motion to accept the October 2009 minutes as drafted was moved, seconded, and approved unanimously.

3. Subcommittee Reports and Updates:

BRAC – Medical Center Access: Mack introduced the topic by explaining Jack Strausman was in Florida, but Bill Bronrott and Justin Clarke would report on the committee’s findings. Bronrott reviewed the Council’s request to have the committee look at five options, and now the multi-modal sixth option Clark Construction and MCDOT added to the mix. The committee was briefed by MCDOT Director and senior staff in October; in the end, the subcommittee decided not to endorse a single option, but wanted instead to put forth principals and criteria that should be included in the selected option. The subcommittee decided to prepare a letter to the County Council/County Executive that lays out principals and criteria that should determine which the final option is selected. Mack asked how the subcommittee would like to proceed so that something could be provided to the County Council. The timing was discussed. Subcommittee will confer with Phil Alperson on when the committee’s recommendation must be submitted.

ACTION: The subcommittee will contact Phil Alperson regarding the timing of the PTSAC’s recommendation and develop a position to circulate to the full committee prior to the next meeting in January. The PTSAC will vote on the recommendation at the January 2010 meeting. A draft recommendation will be submitted to the full committee as soon as possible, but before Thanksgiving. Email comments and responses will be submitted to the subcommittee for preparation of their final recommendation. Depending on the controversy within the PTSAC, or the timing issues identified by Phil Alperson, the recommendation will either be approved and submitted prior to the January meeting and approved ex post facto at the January meeting, or will be discussed further at the January meeting.

Annual Report Subcommittee: Colleen Mitchell reviewed her first draft with the PTSAC. The report currently has some holes that are being filled, but she wanted to request input for the PTSAC so the report may be finalized in November, per the legislative requirement to prepare an Annual Report to the County Executive at the end of November. If there was anything anybody wanted to add to the report, she encouraged the members to do so. Mack clarified that the report did not need to be approved by the committee, but rather would be a group effort to include whatever the group felt was important. Mitchell asked to have everyone’s input by Friday, November 13.

Silver Spring Library Pedestrian Bridge: Mack reported that the County Executive had submitted a letter (included in the meeting packet,) expressing his disagreement with the position taken by the PTSAC, and his interest in pursuing the construction of a pedestrian bridge from the parking garage to the Silver Spring Library to provide access to those with disabilities. Mitchell expressed concern that the meetings she has attended for the Purple Line and the Library design have been proposing very pedestrian hostile settings - - widened roads, added turn lanes, all concrete facings in front of the library, etc. She asks where are the pedestrian-friendly features being planned? She is hearing Maryland MTA say that the County is requiring them to add lanes to the intersection; she questions whether there is a disconnect between what the County Executive wants and what is actually being designed. Alyce Ortuzar questioned the decision to locate the library at the Purple Line station. Dunckel expressed concern with this being one of several projects he recently learned that pedestrian safety improvements were not being incorporated into the project design, missing opportunities to make upgrades in pedestrian facilities.

4. Results of Budget Priorities Survey:

Dunckel reported on the value voting submitted by PTSAC members. The committee has agreed that the top priority is to continue funding what has already been budgeted for FY 10. Any other priorities were in addition to the already funded items. Dunckel handed out the results of the votes submitted by email – six members submitted votes as of 5:00, November 5. The top priority was the enhanced maintenance of crosswalks; this is less of a budget item than a procedural change. MCDOT wants to issue separate contracts to firms to maintain crosswalks to a specific performance standard; this requires procurement changes. The sidewalk inventory was cited as the second most important new priority; this may

cost \$700,000. Metro Station connectivity was the third highest priority. Discussion ensued on the lighting items. Fred Lees provided an overview of the criteria; Dunckel erred in not including “new street lighting/upgrades” in the options voted on. Moe recommended using crash data to prioritize lighting expenditures. Moe asked what were staff’s priorities. Sidewalk inventory was cited as being one of the most important unfunded items from MCDOT’s perspective.

MOTION: Motion was made and seconded to submit PTSAC priority recommendations for additional funding beyond the current FY 10 funded items to MCDOT staff for submission and consideration by Montgomery County for additional FY 11 funding. Motion passed unanimously.

5. New Business/Committee Comments:

MCDOT Draft Letter on Sidewalks Hearing Process: Dunckel cited consideration by the County Executive and the County Council on revising the hearing process for sidewalks that are supported by the community. Rich Romer informed the committee that there would be a County Council work session on December 7 to discuss this issue. This issue will be discussed at the January PTSAC meeting.

Parking Lot Pedestrian Collisions-Danger Zone Campaign: This issue has emerged as problems for pedestrian safety. MCDOT will be assembling a work group to evaluate the “where and what” of the problem. Mack suggested that this issue should be discussed at the January meeting, and whether the committee wanted to get involved in researching the issues.

Landscaping in the ROW – deferred to January: Inspectors will be invited to the meeting. This issue was first raised in September. Ortuzar suggested the size of motorized wheel chairs is an issue. Maintenance may be an issue here.

Fire and Rescue Personnel in January, 2010: Mack will invite representatives from Fire and Rescue to the January meeting.

Peter Moe requested the committee be briefed in the future on the process of “problem i.d.” using data driven work efforts, with a follow-up later evaluating how well the work had been targeted, executed, and effective. Bill Bronrott also requested that the committee be presented with “what the data is telling us - - where are the hot spots and what are the factors affecting them.” Dunckel suggested the new HIA selection methodology should also be reviewed with the PTSAC.

The next PTSAC meeting will be on January 7, 2010, from 7:00 to 9:30 - - same place.
Everybody sang Happy Birthday to Chairman Erwin Mack.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:37 pm